



Alabama Chapter

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A Message to All Parents of Children in Alabama ♦ March 2020

The Alabama Chapter-American Academy of Pediatrics understands the worry and confusion surrounding the COVID-19 virus. This virus is especially worrisome because it is new and no one has established immunity to it. At this time, there is no treatment for the virus other than respiratory support when it is needed. Thankfully, for most children and younger adults who are infected, the course is less severe. Often in this age group, symptoms are similar to a bad cold or a case of the flu. The risk to the general public (especially the elderly) must be understood. Many models show that we are at risk of overwhelming our healthcare system, which would limit access to care for all Americans. Please understand that social distancing is very important and requires that you stay home as much as possible. This is the only mechanism we have at this time to slow the spread of this pandemic.

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The state's pediatricians would like for you to help them as they help their families in their practices. In order to minimize risks of exposure to their staffs and other patients, many practices have adopted the following measures:

1. Triageing on the phone all requests for appointments so that they can assess who needs to be seen in the office and when. If your child is ill or needs an appointment, please call your pediatrician. Thanks to new, temporary policies by most insurance companies during this crisis, most pediatricians will be taking advantage of this and in the days ahead, will be able handle minor illnesses without you having to leave your home; you would still be able to talk to a doctor via telephone or secure video. These measures will help everyone the risk of exposure. These visits are similar to office visits and will likely incur a co-pay.
2. Do not go to your pediatrician's office without an appointment – they will be as efficient as they can be about making appointments and trying to decrease wait times.
3. For those visits that do occur at the office, most practices are limiting adults/other families members accompanying the child to one person. Grandparents, especially, should not be the ones bringing children in if possible because of their increased risk of severe infection. If your child has a well visit scheduled and develops a fever, please reschedule the well visit by calling the office.
4. While some offices are doing COVID -19 testing, many are not. There are still very strict protocols in place for those who should be tested. Please understand that pediatricians are following these protocols at the request of the CDC and the Alabama Department of Public Health and this information may change as pediatrician receive new guidance. If your child is showing symptoms and has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, please call your pediatrician's office for instructions about where they can be tested.

Please know that pediatricians in Alabama are all committed to offering you the best care that they can provide and are dedicated to the health of all children.